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UNCLAS RANGOON 001519

SIPDIS

BANGKOK USAID/RDM ASIA FOR MATTHEW FRIEDMAN; STATE FOR EAP

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TAGS: [TBIO](#) [SOCI](#) [KHIV](#) [APER](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY RANGOON CONDUCTS HIV/AIDS TRAINING FOR ALL MISSION PERSONNEL

REF: 03 BANGKOK 4203

1. Summary. Embassy Rangoon has completed HIV/AIDS awareness training for all current mission staff in accordance with the Department of State's HIV/AIDS workplace policy and a Plan of Action established at the July 2003 HIV/AIDS Chiefs of Mission Conference in Bangkok, at which COMs committed to "conducting HIV/AIDS awareness training for every person under our authority." (reftel) Training seminars ran throughout 2004, with the entire staff (including all agencies, direct- and local-hire personnel, and FSNs) attending mandatory sessions that covered topics such as HIV/AIDS transmission, prevention, treatment, societal impact, and overcoming negative perceptions and stigma associated with this disease. The training was an overall success and also significantly contributed to the knowledge of Embassy personnel in combating HIV/AIDS in Burma, where an estimated 1.9 % of the population is infected with the HIV virus. End Summary.

2. Embassy Rangoon, in conjunction with a local NGO, held eighteen classes of 20 employees each between April 30 and September 20, providing HIV/AIDS training for all Embassy workgroups and sections. The three-hour, interactive seminars (at a reasonable cost to the mission of roughly \$9.00 per person) were given in both English and Burmese, with 278 Locally Employed Staff (LES) and approximately 47 American personnel attending the training sessions in mixed groups. The courses taught participants about transmission, prevention, and treatment through multimedia presentations, games, open question-and-answer sessions, and activities that tested knowledge of HIV/AIDS issues.

The Myanmar Business Coalition on AIDS

3. The Myanmar Business Coalition on AIDS (MBCA), a local NGO that specializes in providing workplace HIV/AIDS training to businesses and large organizations, conducted the classes for the U.S. mission. Founded in 2000, MBCA has been funded by AusAID, the Fund for HIV/AIDS in Myanmar (FHAM), and many local businesses. The organization's stated mission is to bring corporate resources to assist in HIV/AIDS prevention and to promote nondiscrimination policies and education programs in the workplace. MBCA staff is comprised of local doctors and health educators that make "house calls," bringing their demonstrations and classes into the workplace.

Feedback from Staff

4. The feedback from our local staff was overwhelmingly positive. One key impact of the training was a broadly expressed intent of employees to share the information learned with family and friends. Several LES employees also commented on the lack of sex education in the Burmese school system, compounded by parental reluctance to discuss sexual issues with children. For some employees, the Embassy HIV/AIDS training was the only sex education they had ever received. Several LES asked about holding follow-up classes and discussion groups. One staff member commented that although Burmese media had changed considerably in the past decade, presenting a more western approach to sex and male-female relations, there was no practical information on sexual health readily available to the general population.

5. The post health unit staff also attended a session to observe the training techniques of MBCA, and our post physician opined that from a medical standpoint the sessions were well conducted, significantly raising HIV/AIDS awareness in our embassy community. American staff members also expressed a positive view of the training and, even though many felt they were already knowledgeable on HIV/AIDS issues, concluded that the sessions served as a good refresher.

6. Comment: As follow-up steps, Embassy Rangoon is considering holding advanced training sessions and running future classes on a regular basis in order to provide training for new embassy staff and for eligible family members and household employees. End Comment.

MARTINEZ